

17794/p

CHRYSOPOIEA:
BEING A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
Hermetical Science, &c.

Price One Shilling.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30352332>

C H R Y S O P O I E A :

B E I N G A

D I S S E R T A T I O N

O N T H E

Hermetical SCIENCE.

Wherein is proved by undeniable Arguments,

The Possibility of making GOLD by ART, in favour of the *Alchymists*. The Probability of it, learnedly discussed and refuted: And such Cautions given to those who are inclined to this Study, as will, if diligently attended to, prevent their falling into fatal Errors.

D E D I C A T E D

To the Venerable Brethren of the
Laudable Order of *R. C.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-Lane.*

M D C C X L V .

NEW YORK
THE
DISSEMINATION
OF



THE
DISSEMINATION

The following is a list of the
titles of the books in the
collection of the
New York Public Library
for the Astor, Lenox and
Tilden Foundations
which are now in the
possession of the
New York Public Library
for the Astor, Lenox and
Tilden Foundations

To our honorable patrons of the
New York Public Library

NEW YORK
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOR THE ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
1898



R E A D E R,

I Would not have you take it ill (for if you should, you yourself will have the worst of it) when I tell you it's purely owing to Chance, that I have given you or myself the trouble of this Address. For though Custom has imposed this sort of a Tribute on Writers of all Classes, yet I am so accustomed to do things out of the common Road, and am naturally so great an Enemy to Loquacity either in myself or others, that had it not been for the sake of filling up a blank Page or two, which I found was necessary, lest you might complain of not having enough for your Money; 'tis a thousand to one, but you had abruptly fell into Company with the following Dissertation without so much as an *Ingrederere ut proficias*. You may perceive already I am a Plain-dealer, and do not pretend, like many other Writers, to present you with what I expect you should pay for; so that if those act with more Complaisance, you must acknowledge I have the Advantage of 'em in point of Sincerity. I must own this is an unfashionable Principle;

P R E F A C E.

but as I am an old-fashioned Fellow, it's too late in the Day for me to think of conforming to Court Tastes and French Fripperies : And therefore without further Circumlocution I shall let you know as succinctly as I can, what you are to expect from your Perusal of the subsequent Pages. The Treatise itself was originally wrote in the Spanish Language by a Benedictine Monk, the present Bishop of Oviedo, agreeable to the Philosophy of the Schools, and sufficiently shows the Author to be a Man of Ingenuity and Reading. As on the one side it must be acknowledged, that though his Arguments are not all of them conclusive, especially in what regards the Theory of the Alchymistical Art, they are offered with great Modesty, and far from that dogmatical Assurance we so often meet with in Churchmen of most Persuasions ; but more especially in those who plead a sort of a Right to Infallibility. So, on the other hand, it's very evident his Inferences are not always fair ; but seem to be clouded with such gross Prejudices, as are only becoming the vulgar and narrow-thinking Part of Mankind. And that I may not be thought to censure at random, I will produce an Instance or two. A great Number of Alchymists, says he, have been found egregious Cheats. The Inference he apparently would draw from thence is, That there is no such thing, nor ever was, as
the

P R E F A C E.

the Philosopher's Stone. A much greater Number of Priests and Fryars, say I, nay some Bishops and Popes too, have been guilty of flagitious Enormities. But would it be fair to infer from thence, that the Christian Religion is a mere Non-entity; or that Morality consists in potentia only, but not in esse? I don't doubt but the same way of reasoning, were there any thing in it, would equally hold good against every Sect of Philosophers or Society of Men of all Arts and Sciences whatsoever from the Creation to this Day. But now to use this Author's own Words, the most conspicuous, and at the same time the most ridiculous Objection he urges against the Chryfopoiea; and which by his manner of ushering it in, he thinks absolutely irreconcilable and unanswerable, is, That the Primordial Authors or Princes of the Chymical Sect are all a Rabble of Sarazens and Mahometans; (he should have added Jews) whereas all, or almost all the Christian Authors who have wrote on this Subject give for an indispenfible Precept, That he who intends to apply himself to this Art must be a good Christian, devout, humble, of a right Intention, and of a pure Conscience. But what is all this to the purpose? For unless he could prove, that in rerum natura it's impossible there ever was, or ever can be such a thing as a well-meaning, devout, honest Pagan

P R E F A C E.

Pagan or Mahometan; and that Morality was never inculcated, practised, or so much as thought of in any Part of the World before the Christian Æra, and has been confined ever since to the Professors of this Religion only; and that the Gospel itself is not, strictly speaking, a perfect System of Morality: I say, without he can prove all this, I can see no Inconsistency in what these Christian Authors have advanced in regard to the Qualifications that are requisite in one who would be an Adept: supposing any of those Authors should have made use of the particular Epithet of a good Christian; which nevertheless I do not remember to have found in one of them. 'Tis true, they all recommend Prayer, Humility, Sincerity, Temperance, Sobriety, and a Mind divested from Ambition and worldly Grandeur; and that these Qualifications may be found (and I am afraid more frequent, to our Shame and Reproach be it spoken) as well in India, Persia, or Turkey, as in the most refined Court or Country in Europe, is what I believe he will not contest: Or if he should, the Experience of Travellers and Testimony of Historians of almost all Nations will sufficiently shew his Mistake, and evince the Truth of my Proposition. But however, it is not for the Interest of Society in general, that the World should think otherwise than it does; and therefore so far from endeavour-

P R E F A C E.

endeavouring to confute any thing else he has advanced, or persuade Men of the Reality of the Subject, I shall only say, Si Mundus vult decipi decipiatur. And, Reader, I must tell you further, my Opinion is, That if you have not Penetration enough to discover in Virgil's never-dying Verse, the grand Key that opens the Door to this inestimable Treasure of the Philosopher's Stone, you'll not find it in any Book that ever was, or ever will be wrote while the World stands. As to the following Translation, if any of my Readers should find fault with the Style, and say it might have been better; they shall readily have my Concurrence: for I am not so choleric, as to dispute and quarrel with 'em about Trifles. Nay, should they be malicious enough to put the Question home to me, and say, Why then did you not mend it? I am condescending enough to furnish them with two or three Answers, that they may apply which of 'em they like best. As for Example: Perhaps I thought the more literal the Translation could be, provided I kept clear of Barbarisms, it would be much the safer; for fear of deviating from the genuine Sense of the Original. Or perhaps I was of Opinion, a plain Style best suited the Nature of the Subject. Or perhaps after all, I could not write a better. And now, if I am not mightily mistaken, the last of these will be most agreeable to the Com-

P R E F A C E.

plexion and Constitution of the major Part of my Readers; therefore I hope I have settled that Point to their Satisfaction. In the next place I suppose it will be ask'd, Was there ever any thing more absurd, than to place what I call a Dedication at the End of the Work? This, I must confess, is literally quite out of the way; and my Printer was so good-natur'd as to give me a hint of it: but he was perfectly convinc'd by the Reason I gave him, That should it have stood in Front, and been first read, perhaps the Reader's Curiosity would have been satisfy'd; and then what would become of the Book itself? I can't take upon me to determine, whether this Reason may be altogether so cogent to my Readers as it was to my Printer; but, as in the Case above, if they disapprove of it, I freely consent to their substituting a better in its stead, if they can think of one; for I declare I can't at present. Thus with the utmost Frankness and Submission I lay open my Defects, leaving my Readers to be the Judges, and to pass Sentence on my Performance. And this I may as well do as not; because if they buy the Book, they will after Perusal (but not till then) have an undoubted Right, without my Leave, to think of it as they please; and I am not so vain as to imagine any thing I can say will be able to prevent 'em from speaking what they think of it, be it good or ill.

And

P R E F A C E.

And now, Reader, I shall for a Conclusion make bold with the usual Phrase of a late famous Divinity Professor, who liv'd somewhere or another, it's no matter where: Finem jam faciam, nam te probè exercui. Our Acquaintance together being yet but very slender (and were it more substantial, I must tell you I abominate Ceremony) I can only say, if you are one of the very few of whom the inimitable Persius has given us the Description,

*Compositum jus, fasque animo, sanctosque recessus
Mentis, & incoctum generoso pectus honesto.*

I honour and respect you, and should be proud to call you Friend. An Appellation I am not very ready to conform with the Fashion of bestowing at random. But if you are like many others I have met with in my Travels, Vox & præterea nihil, I care not how little I have to do with you; so farewell.



C H R Y S O P O I E A :

O R, A

DISSERTATION

O N T H E

Hermetical Science.

AN inordinate Desire of Riches, that *Auri sacra Fames* of the Poet, has given Rise to the pretended Invention of two particular Arts; the one is, how to make that most precious Metal, so much desired by People of all Ranks and Conditions; the other is, how to search after and discover That already made by Nature, in its hidden Recesses in the Bowels of the Earth. The Aim and End of the first, is the Transmutation of all other Metals into Gold; which

which, according to the *Greek*, is called *Chryſopoiea*, or the Art of making Gold. The ſecond conſiſts in the right Knowledge and Uſe of what is called the *Virga Divinatoria*; and by the common People, the Miner's Rod or Wand. We ſhall confine ourſelves in this Diſcourſe to the firſt of theſe.

The Art of making Gold, according to the eſtabliſh'd Opinion of Men of Judgment and Probity, is an ancient but vain Undertaking, ariſing from Avarice: - An agreeable Deluſion, which begins in a Dream, and goes on till it oftentimes ends in Diſtraction. An amuſing kind of a Method of reducing to Poverty thoſe that aſpire to be Rich, by prompting them to waſte in fruitleſs Experiments the Gold they already have, in ſearching after That they are never likely to be Maſters of. The major Part of Philoſophers look upon this Art as abſolutely impoſſible; but, on the contrary, the Alchymiſt aſſures us poſitively of its Exiſtence. We are of Opinion both one and the other are miſtaken; and therefore taking the middle Way, we ſhall readily agree to its Poſſibility, in Oppoſition to the Philoſophers; and abſolutely deny its Exiſtence, againſt the Alchymiſts. And this we think we ſhall be able to make good
by

by such forcible Arguments, which if not convincing, it will be found a very difficult matter to bring others that shall have Weight enough to preponderate the Scale on the other side of the Question.

The Author who, under the Name of *Theophilus*, translated and illustrated with Notes and Additions the Treatise of Alchemy of *Æireneus Philalethes*, philosophizes very prettily upon the Possibility of artificial Gold: He explains aptly enough in what Manner Art is able to perform the Works of Nature, which consists in the Use of certain Subjects and natural Agents; so that Nature is the Performer, and gives the Activity; and all that Art has to do in the matter, is the right Direction and Application of those Subjects and Agents adequate to the End proposed. He proves solidly and consistent with the vulgar Philosophy, the undeniable Possibility of making Gold by Art; for, according to the *Peripatetick* School, Matter being indifferent for all Forms, if the Artist meets with the Agent proper to introduce into it the Form of Gold, applying it as it ought to be apply'd, he will doubtless attain the Production or Education of the said Form. He lays down the Chymical Principles, and applies them very rationally and methodically to his purpose.

pose. In fine, with the so much talk'd-of Experiment of the Transmutation of Iron into Copper by means of the Lapis Stone or blue Vitriol, he accounts plausibly enough for the Possibility of metallick Transmutation.

From hence we shall further observe, that the Argument taken from the Indifference of Matter for all Forms, although propounded by the afore-mention'd Author only in the Terms of the *Aristotelian* Philosophy, has still a more apparent Force in those of the *Cartesian*: For, as in the System of *Descartes*, the Variety of Mixts consists only in the different Texture and Configuration of their Parts; according to this System, the Artist has less to do for the Production of any Mixt whatsoever than in the *Aristotelian*; because he has no need to derive that new Entity from the Matter, which the *Aristotelians* call substantial Form, but only to vary the Texture and Figure of the Parts; which comes equally, or indeed with more Propriety, under the Jurisdiction of Art rather than Nature. For which reason some say, (and they say well) that the Composition of natural Mixts, as *Descartes* proposes them, is rather artificial than natural. At least it is certain, that the Form of artificial Compounds consists
only

only in the Contexture and Configuration of the Parts whereof they are compounded.

It must be observ'd by the way, that this Argument is not at all adapted to the System of the Atomists, who do not admit of a Matter indifferent for all Forms. For, according to their Opinion, the Figure and Motion of the Atoms being invariable, any Atoms whatsoever cannot compose any Mixt whatsoever; so that Nature not being able to alter in any manner those ultimate indivisible Particles of Matter which these Philosophers have fram'd, is necessitated for the Formation of such particular Mixt, to make use of such Atoms as are its Elements. As Nature therefore cannot make any Mixt whatsoever of any Matter whatsoever, with greater Reason may it be suppos'd that Art cannot do it; which in all its Productions brings nothing to Perfection without the Assistance and Example of Nature.

For this Reason, in order to prove the Possibility of artificial Gold, by an Argument that may be adapted to every philosophical System, it must of necessity be form'd not on the first Matter, nor yet on a Matter remote from Gold; but on the proximate Matter be it what it will. It's certain,

that in the Formation of Mixts of all the three Kingdoms, animal, vegetable, and mineral, Nature does not immediately make use of Matter totally void of Form ; nor yet indifferently of Matter already invested with any Form whatsoever ; but with Matter already invested with a determinate Form, which Form has been given it as a Prelude or Preliminary to the Form of the Mixt which she labours to produce. Thus an Animal is produc'd from Matter that has anteriorly receiv'd the Form of an Embryo. A Plant, from Matter invested with the Form of Seed. The Matter proximate to Minerals does not so occur to our Senses, as that we can be certain what it is ; but there is no Doubt that in a proportionate degree they have their seminal Matter : and as to Metals themselves many Philosophers judge they procreate from true and actual Seed, and that they are really and strictly speaking Vegetables ; for which Reason they do not scruple to give them the Name of subterranean Plants.

But whether Metals are Vegetables or not, 'tis undeniable that immediate to their Generation, Matter preceded under some determinate Form, wherewith is made a Mass or Substance which serves to the Purpose of Seed, Prelude or Rudiment of the
metallick

metallick Compound that Nature intends to produce. Whether this Mass is compounded of Vapour and Exhalation, as *Aristotle* will needs have it, or of Sulphur and Mercury, as the Chemist pretends, or of Acid, Alkali, and Sulphur, as many of the Moderns are of Opinion, or of Water and Earth, as others imagine; let which soever of these Opinions prevail, our Hypothesis stands established.

It is in like manner certain, That there is some determinate Agent, which working upon this proximate Matter reduces it to the State of a Metal. Upon these undeniable Propositions we form our Syllogism in this manner: Art is capable of applying such an Agent, whatever it be, as has Activity to form Gold from that proximate Matter whereof Gold is form'd; then Art is capable of making Gold. The Consequence is evident, and the Antecedent undeniable; for supposing that there is in Nature such an Agent, and such a Patient, and that they are applicable one to the other; what Reason can be assigned why it is not possible that the Industry of Man should find them out, know and apply them?

Thus far we are Advocates for the Alchemists, but not a step further; for leaving the Subject in this general State, the Possibility of artificial Gold seems to be prov'd effectually. But when you proceed to the Matter and the Agent, which the Alchemists would make you believe are to be employed in order to attain it, you hardly meet with a Supposition or a Proposition that does not appear to be false, or at least doubtful. We will here lay down by way of Compendium the Doctrine of those few who have wrote so as to be understood, as *Bernard Trevisan*, *Theobald Hogheland*, the Translator of *Philalethes* and some few others; for as to the rest, who purposely talk nothing but Gibberish, Who can pretend to oppugn or refute them, if it is not possible for any body to understand them?

First then, They tell us that all Metals consist of the self-same specific Principles; or in other Words to the same purpose, That the proximate Matter of all Metals is specifically one and the same; that is to say, Sulphur and Mercury.

2dly, They tell us that Metals differ from one another only according to their greater or lesser accidental Perfections; which depends

pend upon the greater or lesser degree of Purification, Depuration, Decoction, Exaltation, or Fixation of the Sulphur and Mercury whereof they consist. Consonant to this they tell us in the third Place:

3dly, That any Metal whatsoever may be transmuted into Gold, exalting it from its imperfect State to a State of Perfection; promoting by the Assistance of Art those degrees of Depuration, Purification, and Fixation of the Sulphur and Mercury, which are necessary for that purpose.

4thly, They say that in order to perform this, they are to seek for Agents, the philosophical Sulphur and Mercury; the first whereof they call the masculine Agent and the other the feminine; and in these two when mixed or amalgated together by a due philosophical Process, resides the seminal Virtue adequate to the Production of Gold.

5thly, They say that this philosophical Sulphur and Mercury must be sought for in Gold itself, for the Dissolution of this Metal into its first Principles.

6thly, They say that this Sulphur and Mercury wherein Gold is dissolved, are not
philoso-

philosophical in their natural State; that is to say, They have not yet the transmutative Activity; but they must of necessity be exalted to a much greater Perfection by Art; and after they are thus exalted they have the Virtue to tinge and intimately to penetrate the other Metals, giving the Sulphur and Mercury whereof these consist, that ultimate degree of Fixation whereby they become Gold. This Mixture of Sulphur and Mercury so exalted, wherein resides the transmutative Virtue, is what they call Elixir, Tincture of Gold, or according to the vulgar Phrase, the Philosopher's Stone; although according to their own Description of it, 'tis not in the Form or Consistence of a Stone, but a Magistery or Powder.

This brief Account of their Doctrine, stated with the greatest Perspicuity the Subject will admit of, is all that one finds intelligible amongst the alchymistical Writings; the rest is nothing but Dreams, Allegories, enigmatical Phrases, and Contradictions of one another. Even in some Particulars of those we have just recited, there is no small Difficulty to understand their meaning; insomuch that a Person perusing any two distinct Authors, can hardly avoid making a different Conception on the
Point

Point he is endeavouring to satisfy himself in. As for Instance, one Author indicates the Matter of the Philosophers Stone to be only the Sulphur of Gold; another the Sulphur and Mercury; others again, the Mercury alone. And were it not for the Explication that *Bernard Trevisan* (an Author of special Authority amongst the Professors of Alchimy) gives to this seeming Contradiction, it would have remain'd as great a Mystery as the rest. He, indeed, endeavours to solve this Paradox by saying, That the philosophical Sulphur and Mercury are not two Substances; that they are never separate, but contained and enveloped, as it were, one in the other, that is to say, the Sulphur in the Mercury. *Ex his manifeste patet* (these are *Trevisan's* Words) *Sulphur non esse quid per se seorsim extra substantiam Mercurii.* And a little further, where he cites *Geber*, *In profunda naturæ Mercurii est Sulphur.*

We have already said, and now say it again, there is not in all this Series of Doctrine any one Position that is not either false or doubtful. And first, it supposes the chymical Principles to be as follows; (which we can by no means grant, because the Existence of those very Principles is so uncertain, that nothing can be more so,)

That

That all Mixts are compounded of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, which they call active Principles; and of Water and Earth which they call passive. But this is what the Sectaries of the chymical System are far from proving; for all they can pretend with Certainty is, that in the Solution of Mixts made by the means of Fire, they perceive these five Substances to be separated. But this Proof is very defective, because they cannot be sure whether the Fire separates or produces them; for which Reason, as that great Chymist *Boyle* observes, the Experiment alledg'd is better adapted to infer that Salt, Sulphur and Mercury, are made from Mixts, than that Mixts are compounded of Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury. And if the great Activity which the Fire hath to introduce a new Texture even in the insensible Parts of such Bodies as are dissolved by it, be observ'd, it will be found highly probable, that from its Action, new Substances result which did not exist in the dissolved Body. For Instance, by the Action of Fire we see, that from Earth and Ashes, or even from Earth itself, if the Action of the Fire is very violent, is form'd that transparent Substance which we call Glass; Who, for this Reason, will take it into their Heads that the Earth is form'd of Glass? But further,

those

those five Principles are extracted from some determined Mixts; not from all or any Mixts whatsoever, as *Boyle* confesses, and with him, other Chymists of Veracity. Again, from some Mixts, besides the five Principles, other Substances are extracted different from all of 'em. The same *Boyle* gives us an Example in the Juice of Grapes, which by various Operations is reduced into many Substances of different Textures and Virtues; whereof some have not the least Affinity with the chymical Principles. Still further, the Separation, which as more peculiar and sensible may be attributed to Fire, is that whereby the Fixed is divided from the Volatile; this being dissipated in Smoke, and that remaining in Ashes: Notwithstanding, even this Separation is deceitful; for from Smoke condensed into Soot, is drawn by a fresh Solution, Salt and Earth, which are fix'd. They that desire to see more into the Fallacy of chymical Experiments, may possibly be fully convinc'd, if they attend to what *Boyle* has left us on that Subject in his sceptical Chymist; for as to my own Part, the Authority of this great Man is sufficient, since by the Confession of the Learned of all Nations, in what related to experimental Physicks, he has not been exceeded

D by

by any Body, in Knowledge, Exactitude, and Veracity.

Secondly, We must remark, that the Alchymists themselves (at least those of them that have fallen under our Observation) make a material and substantial Alteration in the chymical System. For in the Composition of Metals they only introduce Sulphur and Mercury, without making any mention of Salt; which latter, the Chymists account as indispensably an Element of all Mixts, without excepting one, as are Sulphur and Mercury. And here it's well worthy to be observ'd, that Salt being, according to the chymical Doctrine, what gives Weight and Tenacity to Bodies, it ought so much the rather to enter into the Composition of Metals; and more especially of Gold, that being the wieghtiest Mixt, and of the firmest Texture of any hitherto known.

Thirdly, Supposing we should admit that Metals consist of the Principles assign'd them, Sulphur and Mercury. We ask then, Are each of these two Principles homogeneous, or specifically one and the same in all Metals? This is what cannot be affirmed with the least Likelihood. We see that the Salt, Sulphur, and Mercury, or to speak
more

more properly, the Salt, Oil, and Spirit, which by Distillation are extracted from Plants, are as different from one another, as the Plants themselves; and in like manner have very different Properties, Virtues, and Uses in Medicine. The same therefore may be reasonably supposed to happen in Metals, wherein there does not appear a lesser Degree of Dissimilitude amongst themselves, than in Plants: Nay, there is a greater than in some Plants, whose Principles are found to be very distinct. The Sulphur and Mercury being then distinct in distinct Metals; it follows that Gold can never be made, *ex. gr.* from the Sulphur and Mercury of Iron, any more than that from the Sulphur, Salt, Mercury, Earth, and Water of one Plant, another Plant may be made specifically distinct.

We are well aware of what the Alchemists will answer to this Objection in Defence of their Doctrine. They will say, that every Plant is a perfect Mixt of itself, originally intended so by Nature, as are all the rest contained under the same Gender. But it is not so with Metals, in whom Nature always endeavours the Production of Gold; and the other Metals are to be look'd on in regard to Gold, only as the same Substance or Matter in different Stages or De-

degrees of Perfection or Imperfection: So that though the baser Metals partake of the same Principles which compound or are destin'd to compound Gold; yet it very often happens, that Nature does not arrive at Perfection in the Work she originally design'd; either from the Impurities of the Matrix, or because the Principles are not combined in the due proportionate Quantities to each other, or by some other Impediment or Casualty.

But all this is no more than meer *gratis dictum*, and destitute of all Probability. For if the Intention of Nature was only to form Gold, and the Distinction between it and the inferior Metals were no other than between the Imperfect and the Perfect in things of one and the same Class; we should frequently, in the same Gold Mines, and in the same Vein, which at last by the Force of a greater Decoction, or Depuration, comes to be Gold, perceive it first in a State of Lead, then Tin, Iron, Copper, and Silver. In the same manner, as when Nature intends a Fruit Tree in its due Magnitude, we perceive it go gradually, passing from lesser Dimensions to greater; and although she intends the Fruit thereof should be ripe and high-flavour'd, we first perceive it in different Degrees of Insipidity
and

and Immaturity. And this Comparison will be found to be well adapted, if it be recollected, the Alchymists call that last Degree of Perfection which the Metallick Principles attain to in Gold, by the Name of Maturity. But as Experience shews us, nothing of this Kind has ever appeared in Mines, it seems plain that the other Metals are perfect Mixts of themselves, adequately distinct from Gold, and as well as that, was primarily or originally intended so to be by Nature, that is to say, perfect Mixts.

It's no Objection to what has been said, that in all, or almost all the Mines in the World, Gold is found mix'd with Silver, Copper, or other Metals; for this depends on the Matter whereof Gold is made, not happening to be pure in the Bosom of the Earth, but blended with the Matter of other Metals: Rather, if all Metals were convertible into Gold, this Metal would many times be found pure in the Mines of other Metals; that is to say, at the time wherein the other Metals arriv'd at perfect Maturity. Besides, Gold is sometimes found mixt with Earth, but the Alchymists do not ever the more pretend that Earth is converted into Gold. We are not ignorant of what the *Sieur Borri* related to *Mon-*
sieur

sieur *Monconi*, that he had seen the Metal in a Mine of Silver converted into Gold in the Space of one Night, by means of a copious Vapour that had ascended out of the Earth. Monsieur *Monconi* recounts this Story in his Journey to the *Low Countries*; but *Borri* did not deserve much Credit, and a great deal less in this Matter; because he endeavoured to persuade all the World of the Possibility of the Philosopher's Stone, and that he was on the Point of having it.

Fourthly, Suppose we should admit that its proper Tincture may be extracted from Gold, call it Mercury or Sulphur or both, it is false that therein resides the seminal and active Virtue of Gold. Which we prove thus; Neither the Mercury nor the Sulphur of Gold, nor both together are the Agents by means whereof Nature makes Gold; therefore the active Virtue of Gold does not reside in them. The Consequence is plain; for the Alchymists themselves confess Art alone has no Activity, nor can produce any Agent whatever; but is only capable of applying the same Agent which Nature makes use of. We prove the Antecedent thus: Nature for the Production of Gold makes no use of Sulphur and Mercury, neither before they arrive at that perfect Depuration or Maturity which they must necessarily have

have to compose this Metal ; nor afterwards. Not the first, because the metallick Principles in their State of Imperfection cannot produce the greatest metallick Perfection, as that of Gold is. Nor yet the second, because when the Sulphur and Mercury attain their perfect Depuration, the Gold is then formed ; Gold itself being nothing else, according to the Alchymists, but the compounded Mixt of depurated Sulphur and Mercury.

The Alchymists encounter us with two strong Arguments (as they take them to be) for their Opinion. The first is the Experiment alledg'd by the Translator of *Philalethes*, of Iron converted into Copper by means of the Lapis Stone or blue Vitriol ; which proves that one Metal may be converted into another Metal more perfect.

To this we answer, First, It does not appear to us, whether what results from the Operation in this Experiment be truly Copper, or only the Iron depurated from some of its grosser Parts, whereby it acquires that Resemblance of Copper. Secondly, It does not necessarily follow, That because Lead, Tin, and Iron may be converted into Copper, therefore any Metal whatever may be converted into Gold ; because it may
be

be those Metals consist of the same Principles as Copper; or they may be the same Metal in Substance, without any other Distinction than what may arise from the Mixture of other heterogeneous Substances. Nor can it be fairly deduced from hence, that Gold is one and the same with the other Metals, or that it consists of the same Principles that they do. We must confess notwithstanding, that if there is no Fallacy in the Experiments alledg'd by the Translator of *Philalethes* in regard to the Transmutation of Iron, Tin, and Lead into Copper, this Argument is not destitute of Plausibility.

The second Argument, which is the very *Achilles* of all the Alchymists, is founded on the Histories there are extant of various Professors of *Chrysopeia*, who have actually performed the Transmutation of other Metals into Gold. The most famous, and those of whom there seems to be any likelihood of their having arrived to the Possession of this grand Secret, are *Raymond Lully*, *Arnoldus de Villa-nova*, *Theophrastus Paracelsus*, *Bernard Trevisan*, an Apothecary named *Anthony* of the same City of *Treves*; and lastly, *Nicholas Flamel*.

But

But the Force of this pompous Argument will fall to the ground as soon as we have made it appear, that there is none in these Relations themselves. Not one of the Authors or Relators of them were Eye-witnesſes of the Facts; all of them have written upon the weak Foundation of popular Rumours, which commonly ariſe from the moſt trifling Occaſions; and in this Matter they are more ſubject to Error and Deception than in any other, from the cunning Stratagems and deceitful Appearances which the Alchymiſts are wont to make uſe of to perſuade People of their being Maſters of the Secret of the Philoſopher's Stone.

Again, if we conſider attentively theſe very Hiſtories they alledge, we ſhall find innumerable Circumſtances to induce us, not barely to ſuſpend our Judgment, but abſolutely to reject their Teſtimony.

Of *Raymond Lully* it is ſaid, That in the Tower of *London*, by Order and in Preſence of the then King of *England*, he made Gold of an excellent Quality; and from that Gold was coined a Species of Money which they called *Raymond's Noble*. But who is it that teſtifies this? Why

E

truly,

truly, *Robert Constantine* a Physician of *Caen* in *Normandy*, who lived two Centuries after *Raymond Lully*; and all who make mention of this Story cite it from him. We have scarce need to ask, whether or no in a Fact of this nature we ought to believe a *French* Author so posterior to *Lully*; notwithstanding the Silence of all the *English* Authors of that and the following Century. 'Tis true, *Raymond Lully* wrote on this Art, and affirmed that he was Master of it; (provided nevertheless the Treatise on this Subject which bears his Name, and whereof we have seen some Fragments, be really his own.) But this proves nothing, so long as it does not appear, that any body has learnt to make Gold by those Instructions; which we may safely venture to affirm will never happen.

Of *Arnoldus Villa-nova* it is related, by some Counsellor of the Law, quoted by *Beyerlink* in his Treatise of human Life, and by Father *Delrio* in his *Magical Disquisitions*; That by the Art of Alchymy he made some little Bars of Gold, which he publickly offered in *Rome* to all Tryals: But how is it credible, that the Fact being so publick, the Pope who then reigned, should not have taken the Advantage of it; it being so easy from this Ability of *Arnoldus* to
 have

have amassed together vast Treasures for the Benefit of the Church? In point of Conscience he ought to have done it; and seeing he did no such thing, it's plain that *Arnoldus* did not give those Tokens of his Skill which are related of him; and that those Counsellors they recite it from, had no other Testimony of the Fact than some vulgar idle Prate.

Of *Paracelsus* there is no other Witness than his Disciple *Ophorinus*, who relates many incredible things of his Master. Besides, he does not say that he ever saw him transmute any Metal into Gold; but only that sometimes over-night being wretchedly poor, he the next Morning would shew him some Pieces of both Gold and Silver, pretending to have made them by the Art of Alchymy. But how do we know that *Paracelsus* had not this Gold and Silver hid, in order to shew it to *Ophorinus* at a proper time, to make him believe that he possessed the Secret of the Philosopher's Stone; which he would fain have made all the World believe? There is so much Vanity and so little Foundation in all *Paracelsus* either said or wrote, that it is needless to hesitate on this blind Piece of Evidence. Other Authors who bragg'd of knowing the *Chryso-poiea*, wrote of this Art in Gibberish. *Para-*

celfus wrote in Gibberish even when he treated of Physick.

As to *Bernard Trevisan*, or the Count of *la Marca Trevisana*, we don't know it appears any other ways that he knew how to make Gold artificially, than that he himself says so, in his Book *de Secretissimo Philosophorum opere Chymico*. And we cannot think he is to be believ'd on his own bare Assertion, especially when in that very Work he gives sufficient Signs of his being a vain and lying Author. One needs nothing more to be undeceived in regard to him, than to take notice of the romantick Authors or supposititious Books that are quoted by him; such as the *Chronicles* of *Solomon*, the *Pandeets* of *Mary* the Prophetess, the *Testament* of *Pythagoras*, the Path of those that err, wrote by *Plato*; no body knows what short Treatise of *Euclid*, the Book of one *Aristeus*, who he says governed the whole World sixteen Years, and was the most excellent of all the Alchymists since *Hermes*.

And here it will not be amiss to remark, That whatever the Alchymists may say of these and other Authors of the greatest pretended Antiquity, who have treated of the *Chrysofoiea*, is all but meer Dreams and Invention.

vention. The celebrated Physician of *Leyden*, *Herman Boerhaave*, who carefully examined this Matter ; says, (*In Prologom. ad institut. Chemiæ*.) The ancientest Writer who mentions any thing concerning *Chrysopoiea*, was *Æneas Gasserus*, who flourish'd about the End of the fifth, or Beginning of the sixth Century ; and the First who treated doctrinally on this Subject, was *Geber*, or *Gebro*, who some make an *Arabian*, others a *Greek*: He flourish'd in the seventh Century.

Of the Apothecary of *Treves*, *Cardanus* relates, That in Presence of *Andres Gritti*, Duke of *Venice*, and the principal Patricians of that Republick, he converted Quick-silver into Gold. *Julius Cæsar Scaliger* makes the same Objection to this Story against *Cardanus*, that we made above, in regard to *Arnoldus de Villa-nova* ; If this, says he, had been true, the *Venetian* Senate would have made use of this Man to have enriched the Republick with immense Treasures, and might have oblig'd him even to have revealed the Secret. Father *Delrio* despises this Objection, and imagines, he answers the first Part of it, by asking, How does *Scaliger* know but that the Senate did so ? To the latter he answers, that he supposes those Senators either despis'd it as a doubtful

doubtful Matter, or look'd on that Experiment as a Piece of pure Legerdemain. A weak Solution of a strong Argument! As to the first, we say, that *Scaliger* knew, and we know too, that the Senate did not make themselves Masters of the Art of making Gold; because, if they had done so, they would likewise have made themselves Masters of the whole *Ottoman* Empire; nay, of the whole World, as any Republick whosoever might and would do, if they could augment their Treasures without Limits. As to the Second, who can believe that the Senate having it in their Power seriously to examine the Matter of Fact, and to scrutinize thoroughly an Affair of such Importance, that they would not do it? The Apothecary of *Treves* was a Subject of the Republick; for *Treves* is in the *Venetian* Dominions, and therefore it might justly oblige him to work for it. It is therefore indubitable, that in case the Experiment had been found to be certain, they would have availed themselves of the Artist; and in case of its being judg'd doubtful, they would apply themselves by the strictest Tryals to discover the Truth: If they did so, it's plain they found the Art delusive, because they made no use of the Artist. Father *Delrio*, to strengthen the Testimony of *Cardanus*, adds that of *Gulielmus*

Gulielmus Aragosius, which is to be found in his Theatre of human Life. (*Verb. Chymia.*) But besides, that the Relation of *Aragosius* in the Theatre is destitute of any Citation to support it, it contains some other Circumstances which render it quite improbable.

Nicholas Flamel, a Native of *Paris*, who lived in the Beginning of the fifteenth Century, and boasted likewise of possessing the Secret of the Philosopher's Stone, was he that amongst all the pretended Adepts, had the most apparent Right of being believed. *La Croix Dumaine*, quoted in *Moreri's* Dictionary, describes him a very ingenious Man; for he says, he was a Poet, a Painter, a Philosopher, a Mathematician, and above all, a grand Alchymist. In the Burying-place of the *Holy Innocents* where he was interred, is fixed up a Board painted in Oil-colours, wherein under enigmatical Figures and Hieroglyphicks, they say, are represented the Secrets which he attained to by the alchymistical Art. The principal Circumstance, and what makes most to the Purpose is, that whereas those who boast of having the Secret of the Philosopher's Stone are for the most Part a Parcel of Poor Ragamuffins, who in their Nakedness and Poverty carry along with them

an

an indubitable Testimony of their Falsity: *Nicholas Flamel* on the contrary, it's well known came to be Master of an Estate of Five hundred thousand Pistoles; a prodigious Sum, especially for that Age. Nevertheless some *French* Authors of good Judgment have discovered in this Acquisition of Wealth, another Secret very different from the Philosopher's Stone. They say, that *Flamel* having the handling and Management of the Finances, gain'd this unweildy Estate by Robberies and Extortions, especially upon the *Jews* of that Kingdom; and in order to hide the iniquitous Method whereby he had amassed so much Riches, and to avoid the Punishment he deserved, he feigned those Treasures to be owing to the Secret of the Philosopher's Stone.

The Translator of *Philaethes* omitting several of the Examples before-mentioned, which indeed are trite; produces three others more particular, and not so commonly known: The first is of the King of *Spain*, called *Don Alonzo el Sabio*, or the Wise; whom he cites from his Treatise, entitled, *Of the Treasure*; wherein he says, that by means of the Philosopher's Stone he made Gold, and very often augmented his Estate. We acknowledge we have never
seen

seen this Writing of the King, *Don Alonzo's*, though we have heard of it; but we may be very confident he never knew the Secret of the Philosopher's Stone, for if he had, he would never have been so destitute of Means, that for want thereof he lost his Kingdom. Let any one read but the 5th Chapter of the 14th Book of the *Father Mariana's* History, wherein are these Words, speaking of *Don Alonzo*: " Nothing
 " gaul'd him so much as the Want of Mo-
 " ney: A Circumstance that defeats the
 " grandest Designs of Princes." And this great Historian presently adds, That to supply this Defect he caused new Money to be coined of Silver and Copper, of a baser Alloy and smaller Weight than what had been customary, retaining the former Value; by which means he gave the finishing Stroke to irritate his Vassals. A notable Sign this, of his being able to multiply his Estate as much as he had a mind to, by the Alchymistical Art.

The second Example is of the Emperor *Ferdinand* the Third, of whom (on the Credit of *Zwelfher*, in his *Mantissa Esparagica*) 'tis said; That with his own Hands he made, in the City of *Prague*, from three Pounds of Quicksilver, two Pounds and a half of pure Gold, with only one Grain of

F

the

the Philosophical Tincture; of which Gold he sent Father *Kircher*, who was then in *Rome*, some Pieces of Money; that he might examine them or have them assayed. And that he having passed them through all the Proofs, found it was Gold in all respects the same as the natural.

We must take the liberty to contradict *Zwelfher* in regard to this Fact; for we very well remember to have read in *Father Kircher's Subterranean World*, that this learned Jesuit being in *Rome*, and having heard the Report that the Emperor *Ferdinand* had made artificial Gold, he wrote to that Prince, of whom he was very much esteemed, desiring to know if it was true. And the Emperor (whose Letter *Father Kircher* there inserts *Verbatim*) answered him, there was no such thing. The Testimony of *Father Kircher* in this Matter, is of much superior Weight to that of *Zwelfher*. And to say Truth, it's reasonable to presume, if that Emperor could have come at this Secret, he would at least have made it hereditary in his August Family, for the Benefit thereof, and of all *Christendom*. How came it to pass then, that the three Emperors who succeeded him, made use of the same Methods of supplying their Emergencies, which other Princes are fain
to

to do; and that sometimes for want of Gold, They, as well as their Subjects, found themselves not a little embarrassed?

The third Example the Translator of *Philalethes* brings, and which is still more recent than the second, is the *Conde Rochetti* of *Naples*; of whom it is said, Not that he knew the Secret of preparing, but that he actually had the Philosopher's Stone; having robb'd a poor Adept who lodged in his House both of it and his Life. And that by the Use of this Stone he performed the Transmutation of Metals in the Presence of several Princes and Potentates, whom he deceived and inveigled out of their Money, with a Promise of shewing them how to make this precious Medicine; till at last being at the Court of *Brandenburgh*, where he likewise imposed upon that Sovereign, this Scene of Villany was discovered, and the Perpetrator of it was hang'd by the Elector's Order, in the Year 1708. The Translator adds, that he himself was a Witness to several Transmutations performed in *Brussels*, not only by the said *Conde Rochetti*, but likewise by *Maximilian Emanuel*, Duke of *Bavaria*, at that time Governor of the *Low Countries*; to whom *Rochetti* had presented a little of the Philosophical Tincture, which he had stolen from the Adept.

To the end that this Example should make any Impression on our Belief, we ought to be well assured that these Transmutations were actually perform'd, without the Intervention of some such Illusion or Juggle as has been contriv'd and generally practis'd by various Impostors, to persuade People that they knew the Secret of the Philosopher's Stone. In the *Treatise of human Life* before-mentioned, we read of a certain *Venetian* call'd *Bragadino*; who with such kind of Tricks defrauded many Princes, and by the Strength of his seemingly apparent Operations, he made all the World believe that he was in possession of the Secret of the Stone; till at length endeavouring likewise to impose upon the Duke of *Bavaria*, this Prince exploring his manner of working with more Circumspection than the rest, discovered the Roguery, and caused him to be hang'd. Why might not the Transmutations perform'd by *Rochetti* be of the same Stamp, purely delusive as were those of *Bragadino*? They both had the same fatal though deserv'd Catastrophe; and we are apt to think made use of the same Artifice likewise. But what shall we say to the Transmutations said to be perform'd by Duke *Maximilian*? Why, what needs more than that *Rochetti* had let his Highness into
the

the juggling Secret he was Master of? and this Prince amus'd himself sometimes with the Performance of that innocent Legerdemain, wherein he did no Prejudice to any body; for Princes like other Men have their particular Fancies and Foibles.

It will not be amiss in this Place just to mention some of the Stratagems which the tricking Alchymists make use of, to persuade People that they can convert any of the imperfect Metals into Gold; which on the whole may be reduced to these following: Either they have the Gold in Powder, or in a Lump; concealed sometimes in the Coals they make their Fire with, or in the Ashes; other times in the very metallick Matter itself, which they pretend to transmute into Gold. As for Instance, Suppose they should put a Piece of Iron into the Crucible; this is Iron only on the exterior Part or Superficies, and real Gold within. Sometimes again they conceal it in the End of an Iron Rod made hollow for that Purpose, wherewith they are wont to stir the Mixture about while it is in Fusion over the Fire; and the Gold which afterwards appears in a Lump at the Bottom of the Crucible, is no other than what they had hid in this Instrument, and melted during the Operation. These are the Devices which
at

at present we recollect to have read in several Authors; but there may be, and doubtless have been, and still are, many others which are not yet detected.

Sometimes these Impostors carry on their Intrigues with such a complicated Diffimulation and Depth of Plot, that they will deceive the most cautious Person living; whereof the following Relation may serve as an Instance. One of these pretended Alchymists being at the Court of *Ernest*, Marquis of *Baden*, found means to be introduced to that Prince, and as a Proof of his Ability, offered to make Gold in his Presence; which being embraced, and he desir'd immediately to put it in Execution, he said, he had none of the Matter about him wherewith it was made; but that it was a Powder of small Price, which they would find in every Apothecary's or Druggist's Shop: The Operator giving the Name of the Powder, the Marquis ordered one of his own Domesticks to go and fetch some of it. The first of the two Trades he happen'd to light on was a Druggist, who was a Foreigner just set up, and had opened his Shop and expos'd the different Wares he had to sell, very advantageously near the Gates of the Palace. The Servant enquired whether he had such a Powder; he readily

readily answer'd, yes; and in short, sold him the Quantity he was order'd to fetch, at almost as trifling a Price as if it had been Sand. This was carried to the Operator, who putting it into the Fire, together with a little Quicksilver, he after some small time took out a Piece of fine Gold. The Marquis, mightily pleas'd with the Success of the grand Secret he had disclos'd to him, entertained the Alchymist magnificently, and gratify'd him like a Prince. Some time after, his small Stock of Powder being exhausted, and having a Mind to make a further Experiment of it by himself, the Marquis sent to get a larger Quantity of this Powder; but it was no where to be had, nor was there an Apothecary or Druggist in the Place, but what declared they had never so much as heard any such Name as the Alchymist call'd it by. As for the Druggist near the Palace Gates, from whose Shop it was formerly fetch'd, he was march'd off, and the Alchymist likewise. It came at last to be known, that these two Sharpers were Partners, and acted in Confederacy; and that the Druggist had designedly opened his Shop in that convenient Part, that whoever should be sent for the Powder, might be sure to stumble on him first, whilst the Alchymist was playing his part of the Farce within Doors; and in short,

short, that the Powder, which in order to carry on the Imposture, had been sold at so very cheap a Rate, was really Gold mix'd and disguised by Art. *Beyerlink* relates this merry Story, citing *Jeremias Meder* for his Author. And Father *Gaspar Scotto* gives you much such another, which happened at *Brussels*.

Notwithstanding all that has been said, we may at last, perhaps, be confronted with the little Bar which the late great Duke of *Florence* had amongst the Rarities in his Cabinet, which was one half Iron, and the other half Gold; and consequently, (as is generally supposed and affirmed) the half which was Gold, could not be made otherwise than by an alchymistical Transmutation of the Iron into Gold. But in answer to this, Monsieur *Homborg*, that excellent Chymist, and a Member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at *Paris*, discovered the Fallacy of this Bar; and in the printed Memoirs of the Academy, you may find the Artifice expos'd by him; he making it appear, that two separate Pieces, the one of Iron, and the other of Gold, may be united, or foldered together in such a manner, as to seem to the Eye but one identical Piece.

Hitherto

Hitherto then, we have opposed the Possibility of metallick Transmutation; that is to say, in the manner the Alchymists pretend to it; for we should be inconsistent with ourselves, absolutely to deny the Possibility of making Gold at all, by reason, in the former Part of our Discourse, we have endeavoured to establish this Point in the Affirmative. But as we have not the Presumption to imagine our Arguments must of Necessity be conclusive and convincing to all sorts of People, we will still add further, That even though this Art were possible in the greatest Latitude the Alchymists themselves pronounce it, no body ought to apply themselves to the Study of it. It would rather be the Height of Imprudence so to do, by reason of the great Improbability of ever obtaining a good Issue therefrom.

This Improbability arises from various Foundations; some of which I shall particularly mention for the Reader's Admonition.

The first Obstacle is, That as the Alchymists themselves confess, amongst thousands of Men who have dedicated the greatest Part of their Lives to this Science, and have

G

with

with the closest Application been hunting after the Philosopher's Stone, only one, or very rarely two have found it. Who then can with any Likelihood persuade himself, that he is to be one of that slender Number of the Fortunate, and not rather one of the immense Multitude of the Unsuccessful? Or who, with the least Shadow of Prudence, will follow a Trade, wherein not above one in a Thousand becomes Rich, and all the rest gather no other Fruit from their Labour and Pains, but to see themselves reduced to greater Poverty? It would be well for every body, the least infected with this kind of Cacoethes, to have in perpetual Remembrance, that Death-bed Saying of *Bernard Penotus*, an able Chymist, who lived to an hundred Years of Age, and had all his Life-time been in quest of this airy Phantom. His Disciples and Friends who surrounded his Bed a little before he expired, begged of him to communicate to 'em, the Secrets he had discover'd relating to the *Chrysopeia*; and the Answer he gave 'em was, Friends, I have no other Secret to commit to your Trust, but only this; That if you should have any powerful Enemy whom you would fain destroy, procure him to be inspired with an ardent Desire of Searching after the Philosopher's Stone: This is the
greatest

greatest Mischief you can do him. Monsieur *Du Clos*, a Physician at *Paris*, who died aged 87, and spent very little time in the Way of his Profession; the greatest part being taken up in his Study of the *Chryſopoiea*; left much such another *Memento* to his Acquaintance when he was dying.

The second Obstacle which renders the attaining this Secret very improbable (and indeed morally impossible) is the want of Instruction. The Means which are generally made use of to obtain it, is the reading of such Authors who professedly treat on this Subject: But these, instead of affording any Light, present nothing but Shadows; so great is the Obscurity of the Stile they write in. Those who have spoke with the greatest Clarity amongst 'em, have only given us to understand those few general theoretical Principles we have before taken notice of; but when they come to treat of the Practice, and the several Operations whereby this Tincture of Gold is to be extracted and perfected; all of 'em, without reserving one, insconce their Meaning behind such impenetrable Enigma's, that although a thousand *OEdipus*'s were to be join'd, they could not be deciphered; so that he who does most, may be said to

be like the River *Alpheus*, which runs above Ground for a very little Space, and the greatest Part of its Course hides itself under the Earth. *Philalethes* (of whom his Translator says, that he wrote with more Clearness than all the rest) confesses of himself, *Chap.* 14. That he does not call Things by their proper Names. If then this is the Manner of Explication of him that speaks with the greatest Clearness, what are we to expect from the rest? Or indeed, what can we expect from him?

In effect, the Authors of the first Rank amongst the Alchymists unanimously agree, that they themselves alone understand what they write; but those who know nothing of the Art, will get no Insight from their Books, unless it be by divine Inspiration or Revelation. *Theobald Hogheland*, in his Treatise, *De Difficultatibus Alchymicæ*, *pars* 2. produces several Instances of this. The Author himself confesses, that notwithstanding he had an hundred Books concerning this Art (which it appears evidently he had well turn'd over) he was not one Tittle the wiser for 'em.

The third Obstacle arises from the Incoherence and Contradictions of the Alchymists, not only in what relates to the Degree

gree of Preparation, wherein some require a greater, others a lesser Number of Operations ; but they vary likewise in the Substance and Series of 'em. Some will have the first Operation to begin with the Solution, others the Calcination, others again, the Sublimation of the Matter : And here it's worth observing, that though the Translator of *Philalethes* took upon himself to reconcile the Contradictions he found in regard to the Matter of the Stone, wherein he has succeeded tolerably well ; he entirely passes over in silence those that relate to the Manner of Operation, which are almost as many as the others.

But the most conspicuous, and at the same Time, the most ridiculous Inconsistency observable in these alchymistical Writers is the following. All, or almost all the Christian Authors who have wrote on this Subject, give for an indispensable Precept, That he who intends to apply himself to this Art, must be a good Christian, Devout, Humble, of a right Intention, and of a pure Conscience ; and they unanimously agree, that without these Qualifications, which they absolutely make the *Sine qua non*, he can never attain to the Knowledge of this grand Secret of the Philosopher's Stone. On the other hand they confess, that this

Secret

Secret was handed down by the *Arabians* to the *Latins*. And the primordial Authors, or Princes of their Sect, which they quote on every Occasion, are all a Rabble of *Sarazens* and *Mahometans*. *Geber*, *Rhasis*, *Avicene*, *Haly*, *Calid*, *Jazich*, *Bendegid*, *Bolzain*, *Albagazel*; from these it is, that *Lully*, *Villa-nova*, *Paracelsus*, *Basil Valentine*, *Trevisan*, *Morienus*, *Rossinus*, and the rest of the *European* Authors, have collected what they have wrote, celebrating them for remarkably great Adepts; especially *Geber*, who seems to bear away the Bell from 'em all. Reconcile me this Paradox, he that can. They tell us it's necessary, in order to attain the *Chrysopeia*, to practise the Gospel; and at the same Instant, propose to us, as the greatest Masters of the Art, the Sectaries of the *Alcoran*.

From what has been said it may be inferred, That the Writings of the Alchymists can only be useful to those who read 'em, not for Instruction, but by way of Entertainment and Diversion, like the Novels or Romances of *Don Bellianis of Greece*, or *Amadis de Gaul*. Yet, we do not for this condemn those Authors, who without boasting of their actually knowing the Secret of the Stone, treat this Subject philosophically, as the Translator of *Philaethes* has

has done, contending for the Possibility only ; whereto a great many Men of Judgment and Learning have assented. This Subject is as worthy of a serious Disquisition, as many others that are purely philosophical : But as to the Books of those Alchymists, who promise by the Strength of their Precepts, the Consecration of this profound Mystery, I believe we may do by them as the Alchymists themselves do with the Metals ; that is to say, calcine, dissolve, amalgamate, smelt, precipitate them, &c. Or when we may not be inclined to proceed quite so rigorously, let us make the same Estimation of 'em, that *Leo* the Tenth made of a Book which a certain Alchymist dedicated to him. The Author, doubtless, expected a considerable Gratuity from that generous Patron of Arts and good Letters ; but what the Pope did, dwindled into an empty Purse, which he made him a Present of ; telling him withal, that seeing he was Master of the Art of making Gold, he could stand in need of nothing more than a Purse to put it in.

DEDICATION.



T O

The Venerable Fraternity

Of the most

Laudable Order of the
R. C.

VENERABLE,

THE almost universal Aim of modern Authors in their Dedications, is to flatter and sooth the Vanity of some powerful rich Man, whom they have pitch'd upon to be their Patron for two important Reasons: The one is, because they expect to be rewarded by him for the unmerited Praises they have so lavishly bestow'd; and the other is, that by the Rank and Figure
H of

DEDICATION.

of their Patron, they would endeavour to palm themselves upon the Publick for Persons of much more Consequence than they really are. I think I shall hardly be suspected by the World of either of these sinister Intentions; because, in the first place, I am so far from flattering you, that the Tract I here present you with the Translation of, was wrote by a profess'd Enemy to your Society, on purpose to ridicule and explode an essential Part of your Science; or indeed what he, with the generality of the mistaken World, seems to look on as the Principal; though the wise and illuminated Sons of the Art regard it only as a Parergon. This then will clear me from the Imputation of Flattery, which you can have no Inducement to be fond of; nor do I know how it would be possible to bestow it on you. And, in the next place, it is not to be thought that I have pitch'd upon you for my Patrons, in order to create a good Opinion of my Understanding and Abilities among the Sciolists; because these are already so prejudiced against, not only your Professions, but your very Existence, that to go about to vindicate the One, or assert the Other, would be deemed a most indubitable Symptom of a distemper'd Brain. And yet, notwithstanding this Discouragement, as well as those so copiously diffused through-

D E D I C A T I O N.

throughout the foregoing Dissertation, I hereby freely confess, that I am exceedingly inclined to believe your Professions to be laudable and true, and your Existence to be sure and certain; nay, and what's more, that I expect some time or other to be both better and wiser for your Elucidations. And now, after this Declaration, a clear Stage be my Lot; for I shall be sure to meet with no Quarter. If our Sciolists or modern Philosophers should have Good-nature enough (which I scarce think they have) to pity me for embracing what they call a Chimera, I shall in return pity them for thinking it such. On the contrary, if (as is most likely) their Spleen should abound so much, as to incite them to rail at me for not thinking like them, they will be the greatest Sufferers themselves, because it's a Disease they'll never be cured of, and I shall only pity them still. I am thoroughly convinc'd, 'tis but a very few that are worthy of being entrusted with so inestimable a Secret as you are able to make them Masters of; and, as to myself, I ingenuously own to you, I am so sensible of my own Frailties, that I sincerely wish to be more perfect, in order to be qualified to know more; or, for my own Peace sake, That I had been less a Sceptick, and had never taken the Pains of searching, in order to
know

DEDICATION.

know so much of it, as to induce me to
subscribe myself, as I do with the profound-
est Veneration,

A true Admirer of

your laudable Professions,

Damcar.

Philo Philalethes.

F I N I S.

17. *W. G. L.*
20. *who is the translator
of Philal.*